

GREENE, MARY BENNETT, M.S. The Transformation of the Battery Park Landscape in Asheville, North Carolina: 1900-1930. (2008)
Directed by Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll. 65 pp.

This research deals with the urban development of Asheville, North Carolina in the first half of the twentieth century and, specifically, the transformation of an urban hillside known as Battery Park. It is a case study of how one person and his beliefs about technology, modernization, and commercial appeal had the power to forever change the city's form. In a very short time period, E.W. Grove transformed a bucolic twenty-five-acre Battery Hill with a rambling Victorian hotel into a flattened automobile-centered commercial district with two skyscraper hotels. During this period, Grove concentrated his financial investments in this area, and worked diligently through many channels to ensure their success. Focusing on the time frame of 1900 to 1930, this investigation covers the Battery Park changes by combining three methods: the careful study of the existing landscape, historic visual analysis, and the use of traditional archival evidence. The ultimate goal of the project is to address the Battery Park landscape as a physical representation of the changing values in Asheville's history. The research traces the physical, functional, and technological evolution of this urban landscape and relates these changes to national, regional, and local history. It examines why certain values in Asheville took precedence over others and whether certain themes, such as transportation, were major influences.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BATTERY PARK
LANDSCAPE IN ASHEVILLE,
NORTH CAROLINA:
1900-1930

by

Mary Bennett Greene

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

Greensboro
2008

Approved by

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

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Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a thesis is as much an academic and scholarly endeavor as it is an personal and emotional journey. Many individuals and institutions contributed their thoughts, time, and expertise to this endeavor. Jo Ramsay Leimenstoll went above and beyond her duties as committee chair to help me complete this project. Jo's expertise, patient support, and friendship were invaluable. Thanks also to Patrick Lee Lucas and Lisa Tolbert whose knowledge and encouragement truly helped me achieve an improved final result.

Without the tremendous digital collections at the D. H. Ramsey Library and Pack Memorial Library, this work would not have been possible. There are a great number of individuals in Asheville who have contributed a great deal to Asheville's wonderful repository of local history. Thanks to Zoe Rhine at Pack Memorial Library, Jerry Ball at Grovewood Gallery, and Kevan Frazier at UNCA for their help with this specific investigation.

Finally, this project would have been impossible without the love and support of my family and friends, particularly my husband Paul and mother Ann Sharp. I would not be where I am today without them.

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INTRODUCTION

This research deals with the urban development of Asheville, North Carolina in the first half of the twentieth century and, specifically, the transformation of an urban hillside known as Battery Park. It is a case study of how one person and his beliefs about technology, modernization, and commercial appeal had the power to forever change the city's form. In a very short time period, E.W. Grove transformed a bucolic twenty-five-acre Battery Hill with a rambling Victorian hotel into a flattened automobile-centered commercial district with two skyscraper hotels. During this time, Grove concentrated his financial investments in this area and worked diligently through many channels to ensure their success. The research focuses on the time frame of 1900 to 1930. In 1900, Edwin Wiley Grove first appeared in city directories as an Asheville resident. In 1930, the Post Office on Otis Street opened its doors as the final building to complete Grove's plans for the Battery Park area. The research covers the transformation of the Battery Park hill by combining three methods: the careful study of the existing landscape, historic visual analysis, and the use of traditional archival evidence. The ultimate goal of the project is a better understanding of how elite individual values influence the physical form of the city. Through this understanding, one can hope to help create better built-environments and better planning policies for the future.

The work serves to bridge a gap in literature on Asheville's social and architectural history. While there is much information about Edwin Wiley Grove and the

Grove Park Inn, more research is needed about Grove's role in shaping downtown Asheville. Additionally, much academic discussion revolves around the influence of the automobile on cities in terms of suburban development; however, less research is available on how the car physically influenced the urban core. Even less discussion involves early twentieth century city forms in relation to the advancing automobile. Asheville is an interesting case study because it was geographically isolated, in the economically backwards post-Civil War South, and yet remarkably cosmopolitan because of the influx of wealthy tourists and architects who eventually made Asheville their home. Additionally, because of the city's terrible debt following the 1929 stock market crash and 1930 bank failures, a large number of early 20th century buildings remain intact with few changes. This makes the physical evaluation of the landscape possible. In addition to the fact that the architectural resources of the Grove Era are still intact, there are excellent primary sources that were helpful for this project. John Nolen's 1922 *Asheville City Plan* is a resource for studying Asheville's early twentieth century development. William Stoddart's 1924 book, *Planning the New Hotel* has not been used in any literature on the Battery Park. Likewise, the photographs, maps, and correspondence collections have not been used to their fullest potential.

This research examines Asheville and the redevelopment of the Battery Park hillside from 1900 to 1930. The goal of the research was to uncover more information about Asheville's cultural history through physical evaluation, archival evidence, and visual analysis of the Battery Park area. A better understanding of the social and

technological issues influencing Asheville's built environment may lead to more sensitive architectural interventions in the future.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Asheville, Western North Carolina's metropolitan center, is located at the confluence of the French Broad and Swannanoa rivers and encircled by mountains (Figure 1). The city has long been known for its natural beauty and striking vistas. Though beautiful, Western North Carolina's mountainous terrain and the associated transportation difficulties caused the entire area to expand slowly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Despite this isolation, Asheville emerged as a trade center for the region, especially after completion of the Buncombe County Turnpike in 1828. The dirt road ran from Greenville, South Carolina through Asheville to Greeneville, Tennessee. In addition to handling the market traffic of cattle and hogs, the road became popular with regional summer visitors seeking cool mountain air (Bisher, Southern, and Martin 1999, 25-26). The Courthouse Square, now called Pack Square, was the center of activity in Asheville. However, it was not until the coming of the railroad that the city began to boom (Swaim 1981, 35).

In 1880, the Western North Carolina Railroad connected Asheville to the rest of the country's expanding rail network and the city quickly became a popular national tourist destination. Colonel Franklin Coxe, a wealthy Pennsylvania businessman who was instrumental in building the railroad, purchased the Battery Porter hillside in downtown

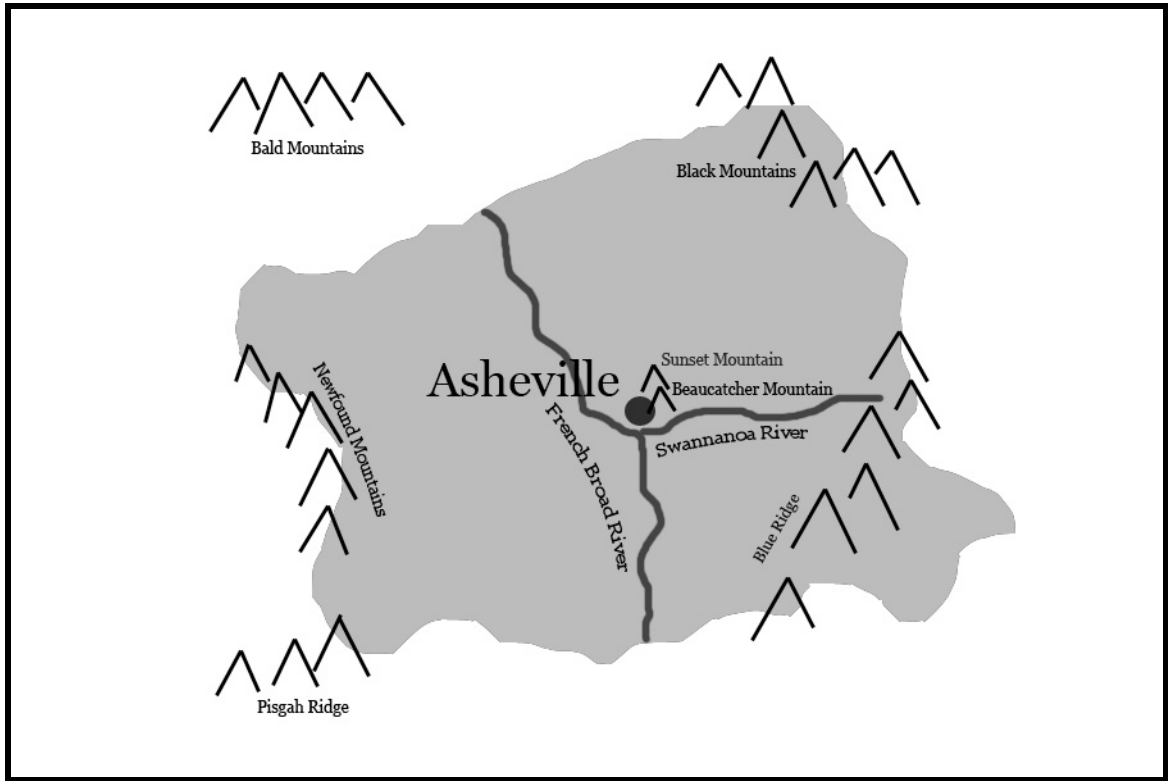


Figure 1: Topography surrounding Asheville and Buncombe County, North Carolina.

Asheville. City residents had used the hill to keep fortifications to defend the city during the Civil War. In 1886, Colonel Coxe built a luxury hotel on the hillside and named the elite tourist destination the Battery Park. The elaborate Queen Anne-style structure had numerous porches and pavilions under a roof filled with turrets, gables, and towers. Set on top of a naturally landscaped 25-acre hillside, the hotel had the most modern and luxurious amenities of the time including elevators, modern bathrooms with hot and cold water, ballrooms, a bowling alley, and even separate billiard rooms for men and women. Coxe understood that a luxury hotel would appeal to the vacationing leisure class of both the North and the South and the hotel entertained many famous guests. Local legend

maintains that George Washington Vanderbilt stood on the porch of the Battery Park Hotel, looked out onto Mount Pisgah, and decided to build his lavish 250-room Biltmore Estate (Black 1979, 9). With a railroad connection and wealthy tourists, many of whom became permanent residents, the city grew more and more cosmopolitan and extravagant for its size and Southern location (Figure 2).

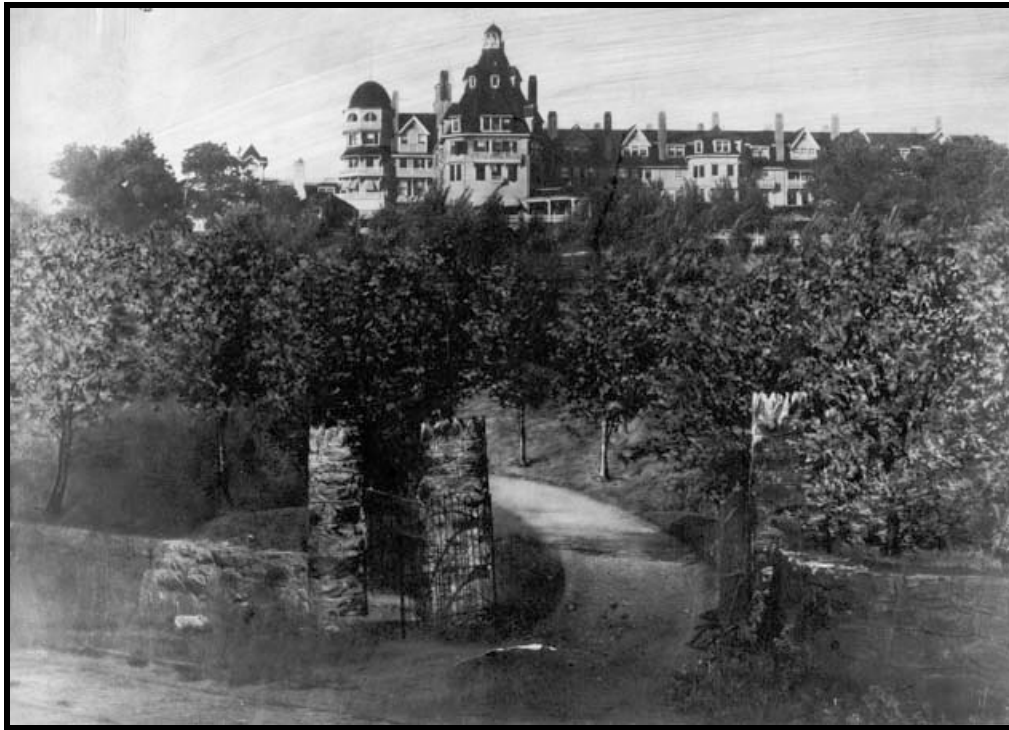


Figure 2: Old Battery Park Hotel (Herbert W. Pelton, NC Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC, A711-8).

According to Richard Starnes,

After the arrival of the railroad in 1880, Ashevilleians set about building a city of high culture, modern urban amenities, and a reputation for southern hospitality – not for their own enjoyment but to keep visitors coming back. (Starnes 2003, 56)

Numerous cutting-edge architects, such as Richard Sharp Smith and Raphael Guastavino, came to Asheville to work on the Biltmore, took up residence in the area, and eventually designed many downtown buildings and private homes. In addition to employing these well-known architects, Asheville's elitist newcomers encouraged the city to become more transportation savvy. In 1889 Asheville became the second place in the world, after Richmond, VA, to build an electric streetcar line, which ran from Pack Square, Asheville's courthouse square, to the Battery Park Hotel (Figure 3) (Starnes 2003, 65). Transportation enhancements and stylish architecture became devices for Asheville to continue attracting more wealthy tourists.

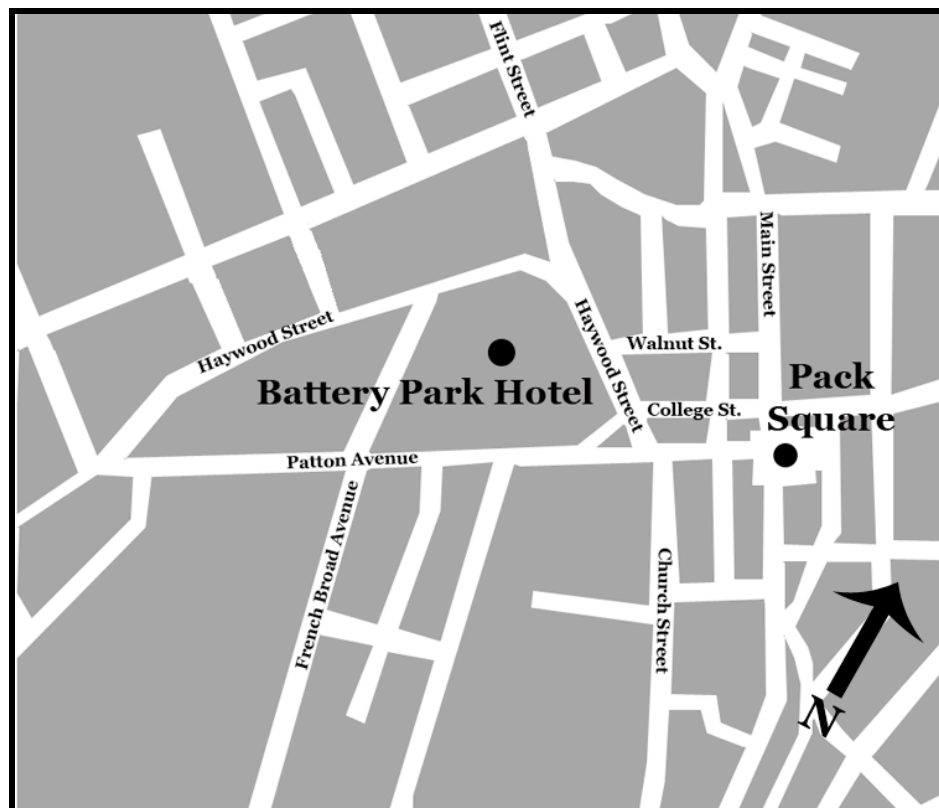


Figure 3: Pack Square in relationship to the 1886 Battery Park Hotel, circa 1900.

In addition to drawing elite tourists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Asheville was known as a place to recover from health problems. The city advertised its clean, healthy air and well-known sanitariums in tourist brochures. Tuberculosis, widespread during this time period without antibiotics, was considered incurable and doctors directed patients with any kind of respiratory illness to places with clean air and water. Asheville's cool mountain air and clean streams made it popular as a health retreat and, as a result, many sanitariums developed in Asheville. An Asheville native explains:

My grandfather came here in 1905 and Asheville at that time completely relied on the tubercular-sanitarium complex. In fact, that's why George Vanderbilt came here; he was tubercular. It was almost like a leper colony in those days. I know Mother would think many times about even allowing us to go into a movie because, of course, they thought tuberculosis was far more contagious than it is. The wave of it was really gone [when I was young], but the fear remained. The only thing they knew to do was to rest, be in the altitude, breathe the clean air, and drink clean water. Many fortunes were made in these sanitariums and a lot of them were very luxurious. (Shackelford 1977, 163)

Around 1900, Edwin Wiley Grove sought relief for his wife's respiratory problems in Asheville (Starnes 2003, 59). Grove had made his wealth in pharmaceuticals, particularly for inventing and patenting a process for suspending quinine powder in tonic. Quinine was the only known remedy for malaria at the time. Though it did not kill the parasite, it did hinder its growth and reduced the associated fever and chills. Grove's product was a success because iron, lemon flavoring, and sugar disguised the bitter taste of the medicine. As malaria swept across the Southern states, Grove was a millionaire by

1894 (Johnson 1991, 2). It was not long after 1894 that Grove and his family made Asheville their residence.

Grove's financial success in the pharmaceutical industry led him to invest in Asheville real estate. In 1908 he bought most of Sunset Mountain north of Asheville's city center and began developing a residential area called Grove Park. Grove hired Chauncey Beadle, a landscape architect who had worked under the Olmstead Brothers on the Biltmore Estate, to plan the community. As part of the development, Grove appointed his son-in-law, Fred Seely, to design the Grove Park Inn, a massive stone structure with an undulating red clay tile roof. The grand hotel incorporated native timber and uncut granite boulders from the surrounding mountains. In 1914, Seely began to lease the inn and Grove received a percentage of the profits while Seely acted as the manager. In a short time, under Seely's direction, the Grove Park Inn became one of the most popular resorts for American tourists of the time (Johnson 1991, 38). With the success with the Grove Park residential area and inn, Grove was established as a major player in Asheville's development.

The construction and success of the Grove Park Inn and residential area preceded a period of unprecedented growth in Asheville. According to Douglas Swaim, over 65 buildings were constructed in the decade following World War I (Swaim 1981, 3). Amidst this building frenzy, the city commissioned John Nolen, a renowned planner from Boston who had planned cities all over the country, to design a city plan in 1922. Appointing Nolen followed the cosmopolitan tradition of hiring nationally prominent

architects and planners. City leaders consistently tried to boost Asheville's status in the eyes of elite visitors.

As John Nolen began his work on the City Plan in 1922, E. W. Grove was finalizing his plans to change the Asheville's commercial area. Grove believed that the Asheville's downtown did not need the park-like setting surrounding the old hotel. Asheville and Western North Carolina had many natural destinations where motorists would enjoy driving. Grove wanted to use the 25-acre grounds of Battery Park as an expanded commercial center with new buildings for retail, offices, and tourist conventions (Swaim 1981, 92). With automobile use becoming much more mainstream in the 1920s, congestion and lack of parking around Pack Square was an increasing problem. Grove's redevelopment of the Battery Park was carefully orchestrated. In 1920, Grove offered \$600,000 to purchase the 1886 Battery Park Hotel and its surrounding 25 acres as well as all of the Coxe family property fronting Haywood Street. He attained the property in 1921 (Carter 1971).

In January of 1922, Nolen began work for Asheville's Planning Commission. Harry L. Parker, Grove Investment's resident engineer, was on the Planning Commission from the beginning (Frazier 2000, 72-76). Parker began writing letters to John Nolen about the Battery Park area in early 1922. Parker made it clear that Grove did not want the public to know about any of his plans for the removal of the Battery Park Hotel and hillside in order to create a new commercial district. Nolen had to omit Grove's plans to demolish the hotel from his work for the city. Even when Grove announced publicly that he planned to develop the Battery Park area as a business and commercial district with a

new hotel, he did not announce that he would also be removing the hill because he feared that there would be public protest against removal of such a beloved natural area (Frazier 2000, 158).

As demolition and excavation crews began work in December of 1922, Grove worked diligently to ensure the success of his development as a modern, efficient, automobile-friendly commercial district. The Battery Park hillside was several blocks west of Pack Square, the city's traditional commercial center. Paul Roebling's 1917 Haywood Building at the foot of Battery Park hill had been called "Roebling's Folly" (Figure 4). Local citizens made fun of the building because it was far from Pack Square. They never expected it to be successful, despite being designed by Richard Sharp Smith and having a novel second story parking garage at the rear (Black 1979, 12-24). Even with this popular condemnation of Roebling's Haywood Building, Grove believed that the area had potential to be a popular destination. Even before the steam shovels had finished removing the Battery Park hillside, Grove had established the area as a commercial district. He erected the new Bon Marche Department store for Solomon Lipinsky in 1923 (Figure 5). The removal of the hillside was such a time consuming ordeal that the new William Stoddart designed Battery Park Hotel was almost finished before the last section of dirt had been removed from the hillside in August of 1924 (Figure 6). The George Washington Vanderbilt Hotel, also designed by Stoddart, opened on Haywood Street in 1924 as well (Figure 7).



Figure 4: Haywood Building, circa 1920s. Arched entrance to indoor parking garage visible. (UNCA Special Collections, E.W. Ball Photographic Collection, N0987).



Figure 5: Bon Marche Department Store, 1926 (E.M. Ball Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNCA, N1521).



Figure 6: 1924 Battery Park Hotel with last part of the Battery Porter hillside in the foreground (NC Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC, A717-8).



Figure 7: George Vanderbilt Hotel, under construction (E.M. Ball Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNCA, N1832).



Figure 8: Flat Iron Building (E.M. Ball Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNCA, N1461).

With two modern hotels and a department store finished in the Battery Park area, Grove turned his attention towards creating more space for commercial properties. The 8-story Flat Iron Building (Figure 8) was completed in 1925 under Grove's direction and it housed business offices and a radio station. The dirt from removing 70 feet of the Battery Park hill was used to fill in an "unsightly" ravine and make building lots available on Coxe Avenue. Coxe Avenue, just south of the Battery Park development,

soon became known as Asheville's "Automobile Row." Many automobile dealerships and garages located there. In the 1920s, automobile dealerships combined sales, maintenance, and storage in one structure. Large elevators and ramps allowed them to move the automobiles from floor to floor. Four of these historic 1920s parking garages and auto showrooms are still located on Coxe Avenue (Black 1979, 30).

Grove's investment was substantial enough that he continued to work for the commercial success of the area. In fact, it is clear that Grove maintained close ties with city leaders and various city commissions in order to stay abreast of all of Asheville's development activity. Asheville's Grove's engineer, Harry L. Parker, had been on the city planning committee that accepted John Nolen's 1922 proposal. Parker, and E.W. Grove by extension, knew everything about what Nolen intended for the city, including his plans for a civic center just north of Pack Square which would included a library, a community building, an auditorium, and a new post office. According to Kevan Delany Frazier,

The new civic center would be close to the heart of the city, including the city hall and court house which were both located at Pack Square. Yet, it would be far enough from the square so as to not add more traffic to the most congested area of the city. Crucial to the scheme was the inclusion of a new post office...Nolen knew that a post office, which also included other federal offices, would be a major draw. (Frazier 2000, 161)

Like Nolen, Grove knew that the post office would draw crowds. However, Nolen's civic center was north of Pack Square but Grove needed to draw people west to the Battery Park area. Grove Investments sought Nolen's approval for locating the new post office in

the Battery Park area. In 1925, Grove Investments hired Nolen to return to Asheville to evaluate a site on Otis Street in the Battery Park area (Figure 9). Grove planned to give the land to the federal government for a post office and he needed Nolen's approval. Nolen obliged Grove Investments and examined the site but he refused to recommend it as a good location for a new post office. Kevan Delany Frazier documented the contentious correspondence that followed. Harry L. Parker first wrote in an attempt to change the planner's opinion. Parker argued that the Battery Park area was growing more popular and that it had more parking than Nolen's location for the post office. Nolen again refused to recommend the Battery Park location. Nolen responded negatively, saying that the street grade was too steep for a public building and that the entire Battery Park area was badly planned. Parker responded bitterly,

You are evidently laboring under the impression that your plan for a civic center will be carried out . . . but as noted in my letter of March 12th, there is absolutely no movement to purchase one square foot of this land for civic improvement, and your plan has been used only by land speculators as a basis of raising prices of all that property, until it is now impossible to buy any of it. (Frazier 2000, 164)

Much to Nolen's chagrin, the federal government accepted Grove's donated property on Otis Street. However, construction of the new art-deco post office did not begin until 1929 and it was finally completed in 1930.

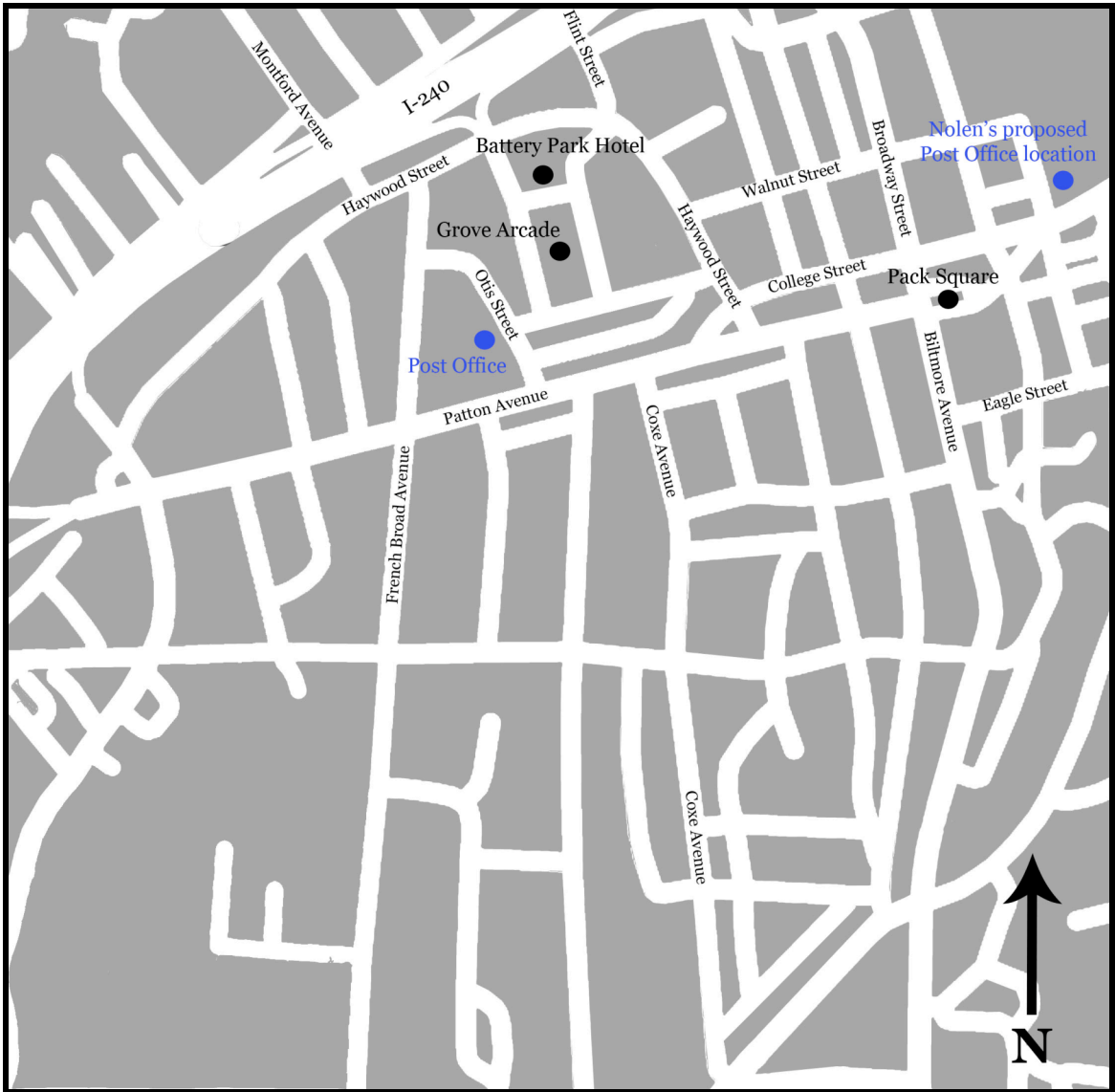


Figure 9: Contemporary map of downtown Asheville showing Grove's Post Office location and Nolen's proposed Post Office location in blue.

With the post office land designated, the new Battery Park Hotel complete, and the land in front of the hotel cleared, Grove made plans for the crowning achievement of his development: the Grove Arcade. Construction began in 1926 on the cleared and excavated site. Architect Charles Parker's plans called for an elaborately styled Gothic

Tudoresque tourist center that occupied the entire block in front of the new Battery Park Hotel. The building plans called for two intersecting shopping arcades with leaded glass skylights, a 19-story office tower, and two ziggurat-like ramps leading up three stories to a roof garden, bandstand, and assembly room. Grove died in 1927 before the building was completed. Walter P. Taylor resumed construction in 1928 and finished the building in 1929 without the 19-story office tower (Swaim 1991, 92-93).

E.W. Grove did not live to see the completion of his Battery Park development, nor did he live to see the repercussions of building so much in such a short time. The 1929 stock market crash and the collapse of Asheville's Central Bank and Trust in 1930 quickly ended the building boom in the city and surrounding Buncumbe County. The city had heavy debts and tourism lagged because of the Depression. The 1920s building boom had glutted the market for commercial and hotel space in Asheville.

Despite all of the information available on E. W. Grove and the Battery Park area from 1900, when Grove first arrived in Asheville, to 1930, when the federal government completed the new post office, there is very little emphasis on cultural and technological issues and how they related to the Battery Park landscape changes. The purpose of this work is to address the Battery Park landscape as a physical representation of the changing values in Asheville's history. The research traces the physical, functional, and technological evolution of this urban landscape and relates these changes to national, regional, and local history. It examines why certain values in Asheville took precedence over others and whether certain themes, such as transportation, were major influences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The dramatic transformation of Asheville's Battery Park is a fascinating story in history. However, it is only by understanding the background and framework on which the proposed study rests that we can begin to understand why a close investigation of the Battery Park landscape is a worthwhile scholarly endeavor in the field of twentieth century landscape studies. This is the appropriate field of study because the research aims to understand the Battery Park area and its buildings in their historical, physical, and cultural context. In addition to reviewing important and pertinent cultural landscape studies, this chapter will also review previous historical and architectural scholarship on Asheville. Understanding the findings in previous scholarship on Asheville's built environment as well as the methods and findings in other relevant twentieth century landscape studies helped form an appropriate methodology for the Battery Park research.

Scholarship on Asheville's Built Environment

There is an extensive body of work that deals with Asheville's built environment. Particularly, historic preservation scholars have done much to document the architectural history of Asheville's boom years. The city's debts following the 1929 stock market crash allowed numerous buildings to remain untouched for many years. However, when the federal government sponsored urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s

threatened Asheville's boom era architectural fabric, historic preservationists worked to record the architectural history of the area. In 1979, editor David R. Black published architectural survey work in the *Historic Architectural Resources of Downtown Asheville, North Carolina*. Two years later, in 1981, Douglas Swaim edited *Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina*. Additionally, numerous National Register nominations were submitted to the Secretary of the Interior from the late 1970s to the present. These works have done much to educate North Carolinians and promote Asheville's valuable historic architecture. To this date, however, no work has dealt exclusively with the Battery Park landscape in a manner that specifically addresses the social, technological, economic, and cultural factors influencing the area's physical transformation and use during the first part of the twentieth century.

Though most of the Asheville architectural scholarship provides insufficient information on the cultural influences involved in the development of the Battery Park area, several works give potential clues about E.W. Grove's personal motivations behind the Battery Park. Two National Register nominations deal with E.W. Grove's developments outside of the Battery Park area: the Grove Park Inn and the Grove Park Historic District. Grove Park was a residential neighborhood that was planned with the help of Chauncey Beadle, a landscape designer who had worked on the Biltmore Estate under the tutelage of the Olmstead Brothers. According to the 1989 nomination, Grove Park "was designed for residents of Asheville who could afford to use the automobile for work and social life" (Grove Park Historic District National Register Nomination 1989).

Grove was fascinated with the new form of transportation. For years Asheville residents had traveled to the top of Sunset Mountain to a music pavilion called Overlook Park. Steam engines pulled the streetcars to the top of the mountain. In 1912, Grove tore up the tracks for a Sunset Mountain Autoway. Indeed, Grove wanted Asheville to have a place for the elite hobby of motoring. From these two pieces of history we can conclude that Grove was very interested in making the automobile a viable transportation option for Asheville. However, in discussions of the Battery Park area, most research does not connect Grove's interest in the automobile to the parking and automobile dealerships built in the Battery Park area.

Doug Swaim's *Cabins and Castles: The History and Architecture of Buncombe County, North Carolina* is a thorough overview of the history, culture, and architecture of the area. It is the kind of interpretation that many cities would dream of having as a local history resource. Swaim is highly regarded within the field of vernacular architecture, particularly for editing *Carolina Dwelling Towards Preservation of Place In Celebration of the North Carolina Vernacular Landscape*. Dell Upton mentioned Swaim's work as a recent noteworthy contribution to the field of vernacular architecture (Upton 1985). Despite the fact that Doug Swaim's work has provided a good overall understanding of Asheville through the lens of vernacular architecture, a case study on the Battery Park area is still needed to build on the existing knowledge about Asheville's built environment.

Historian Kevan Delany Frazier provides more important clues about the motivations in the Battery Park redevelopment. Frazier's dissertation, entitled *Big*

Dreams, Small Cities: John Nolen, the New South, and the City Planning Movement in Asheville, Roanoke, and Johnson City, 1907-1937, does not focus exclusively on the Battery Park area; however, to this date, the work gives the most complete information about the Battery Park. The correspondence between Grove Investments and John Nolen about the location of a new post office shows that Grove found it easy to discredit experts who disagreed with his plans (Frazier 2000).

Bruce Johnson's research on the Grove Park Inn also portrays E.W. Grove as being arrogant. According to Johnson,

While the multi-millionaire publicly claimed that neither the Manor nor the new Battery Park Hotel would compete with the Grove Park Inn, no one was convinced. Family members recall that Edwin Grove had become increasingly jealous of his son-in-law's success at the Grove Park Inn, and speculated that the seventy-two-year-old Grove may have wanted to remind Seely and the people of Asheville of the power and money he controlled. (Johnson 1991, 41)

Despite the descriptions of Grove's personality and love of the automobile, most nominations, surveys, and architectural histories describe E. W. Grove as a wealthy businessman who fell in love with Asheville as a tourist. It was this fondness for Asheville, as the newspaper articles of the time suggested, that compelled him to get involved in Asheville real estate developments. Though much of this story is probably true, it is hard to believe that it was not exaggerated by the city-promoting spirit that dominated Asheville newspapers of the time. Additionally, it calls into question whether Grove really just leveled a beloved hotel and hillside in the spirit of progress. From

Frazier's research we can be certain that he was protective of his investments. Despite many helpful secondary sources on Asheville's Battery Park, nothing provides further insight or answers about the motivations driving the development of the Battery Park landscape.

Richard D. Starnes' 2003 article, "A Conspicuous Example of What is Termed the New South": Tourism and Urban Development in Asheville, North Carolina, 1880-1925, is a more recent work on the cultural and social history of Asheville. Starnes argues that tourism gave Asheville an opportunity for prosperity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when the agricultural economy was less certain. Luxurious accommodations such as the original Battery Park Hotel and the Grove Park Inn were critical in increasing tourism. Boardinghouses served to provide accommodations for less affluent guests. They also offered women, such as Thomas Wolfe's mother, a way to make a living. Tourism became such a critical component of Asheville's economy that public health issues, such as separating sanitariums from tourist institutions, became very important to the business community. Tourism pamphlets and articles were common during this time. According to Starnes, tourism created a local against outsider dynamic, encouraged racial segregation, and even caused the city to invoke less stringent policies regarding gambling and Sunday blue-laws. In his examination of tourism in Asheville, Starnes is careful to cover the social issues facing many groups, including blacks, women, middle-class tourists, and the wealthy elite. Regrettably, Starnes does not cover the redevelopment of the Battery Park area or the role of the automobile in shaping Asheville's urban development.

Twentieth Century Landscape Studies

While the research to this date on Asheville and the Battery Park area does not exclusively address the automobile and its role in shaping the landscape, there are several relevant twentieth century landscape studies that have helped to inform this study. Several sources deal with the role of transportation changes in the commercial landscape. Chester Liebs' 1985 *Main Street to Miracle Mile* examines the transformation of commercial spaces as transportation innovations moved them from downtown Main Streets, to "taxpayer" structures along streetcar routes leading out of town, to eye-catching roadside architecture designed to lure motorists from their cars. Liebs also examines the evolution of specific types of transportation oriented buildings: auto showrooms, gas stations, supermarkets, miniature golf courses, drive-in theaters, motels, and restaurants. Richard Longstreth's *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* examines how Los Angeles became an experimental ground for commercial spaces that integrated the automobile. These automobile-oriented forms, including service stations, drive-in shopping centers, and supermarkets eventually expanded into the national scene as the automobile became more and more popular. Also important is John Jakle and Keith Sculle's 2005 history of parking: *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture*. In examining an exhaustive list of sources to inform their research, Jakle and Sculle argue that parking has played an important role in shaping America's architecture and landscapes since the automobile's emergence as a popular form of transportation in the

early 20th century. These landscape studies dealing with transportation, helped to explain the transportation-oriented national context in which Asheville's Battery Park evolved.

In *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*, Thomas Hanchett skillfully used a broad variety of sources to show that economic and social change, not just innovations in transportation, propelled a "sorting out" of social classes. Using maps, newspaper articles, photographs, deed records, city directories, census records, and manuscript collections as evidence of shifting development patterns, Hanchett was successful in showing that Charlotte's urban evolution, though similar to earlier industrial cities of the North, was distinctly Southern in form. Hanchett showed how elite white real estate developers gradually developed mechanisms to direct blacks and poor whites to particular areas of the city eventually leading to the hard edged segregated patterns still evident in today's landscape. While Hanchett directs emphasis away from transportation changes and more towards economic and cultural changes, the book is, nevertheless, helpful as a case study for the unique way that the urban development of a particular Southern city evolved over time (Hanchett 1998).

One cannot overlook the importance of Alison Isenberg's 2004 book *Downtown America: A history of the place and people who made it*. Isenberg traces the role of a diverse group of people including women's clubs, urban planners, postcard manufacturers, retailers, governments, and real estate developers in constantly transforming America's urban commercial districts from the late 19th century to the present. Particularly helpful to this study was Isenberg's chapter on postcard

manufacturers. The altered images they produced, though often omitting or exaggerating physical realities, more accurately portrayed the unified and dignified modern ideal that downtowns were working towards in the first part of the twentieth century. Isenberg skillfully uses a diverse set of sources including real estate appraisals, city plans, postcards and postcard design correspondence, and retail store studies to explain how a number of individuals worked to constantly transform and reinvent America's urban landscape in order to uphold the ideals of what a modern city should be. Their goal in doing this was to protect and enhance the value of their own individual interests.

Urban landscapes can be interpreted to reveal more about shifting technological, economic, and cultural values and how people have manipulated their environments accordingly. Each of these scholars used archival research, analysis of visual evidence, and physical patterns in the landscape to discover more about evolving cultural values in history. Researching the transformation of the Battery Park landscape from 1900 to 1930 in a similar manner will help provide a better understanding of the history and motivations driving the transformation of Asheville's Battery Park. Understanding how and why the environment was manipulated is helpful in understanding how it might be changed or improved in the future.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study of the Battery Park landscape in Asheville from 1900 to 1930 used methods similar to twentieth century landscape scholars such as Richard Longstreth, Thomas Hanchett, and Alison Isenberg. These scholars skillfully utilized a diverse set of sources to interpret twentieth century landscapes. According to James Borchert, another landscape scholar, in his essay on a streetcar suburb of Cleveland,

Careful study of existing landscapes reveals important insights into earlier patterns of suburban life and culture, but, unsupported by other methods and sources, it can also mislead. On the other hand, traditional historical sources such as census records and newspapers seldom reveal the presence of distinct physical landscapes. Historical visual analysis, drawing on photographs, maps, and other visual records, makes it possible to unravel this seemingly typical middle-class suburb into a series of relatively discreet landscapes. Ultimately, the safest course is to seek multiple confirmation through an approach that combines all three methods. (Borchert 1997, 26)

The Battery Park landscape was examined according to this three-part approach: archival research, visual materials analysis, and the physical analysis. Longstreth, Hanchett, and Isenberg have all shown that it is a good way to uncover and clarify important perspectives on historical city landscapes. The focus of the research is the development of the Battery Park landscape and how the landscape was shaped by the social issues,

cultural values, economic changes, and technological innovations in early 20th century Asheville. The physical, archival, and historic resources related to the Battery Park landscape helped to reveal underlying social and cultural themes and how they relate to the physical form and function of the area 1900 to 1930.

Before elaborating on the details of the archival research, visual materials analysis, and physical analysis, it is first necessary to define the temporal and physical boundaries of the research. E.W. Grove played a major role in changing the area; therefore, it is Grove's arrival in Asheville that will mark the beginning of the time period to be studied. Secondary sources report that E.W. Grove first came to Asheville around 1900 (Swaim 1981, 87).). Though Grove died in 1927, the Battery Park area continued to develop, for the most part, according to his plans. The Grove Arcade was completed without its tower in 1929. The federal government began building a post office on the land that Grove had donated. Despite the 1929 stock market crash, the post office was complete by 1930. Therefore, 1930 marks the end of the time period for this research.

The physical boundaries of the Battery Park landscape are Haywood Street, French Broad Avenue, and Patton Avenue. The area includes the original Battery Park Hotel and land, as well as the properties that were adjacent to the hotel grounds. Additionally, the study includes all of Coxe Avenue, extending south from Patton Avenue, as well as the properties that were adjacent to the land that Grove filled with dirt (Figure 10). These boundaries were used when examining maps and city directories. For both the physical landscape and visual analysis evaluation, it was necessary to evaluate the Battery Park area and its relation to the streetcar route, the major automobile

thoroughfares, and other major Asheville destinations of the time. Including this information in the research helped inform an understanding of what meaning Grove's development had to Asheville residents.

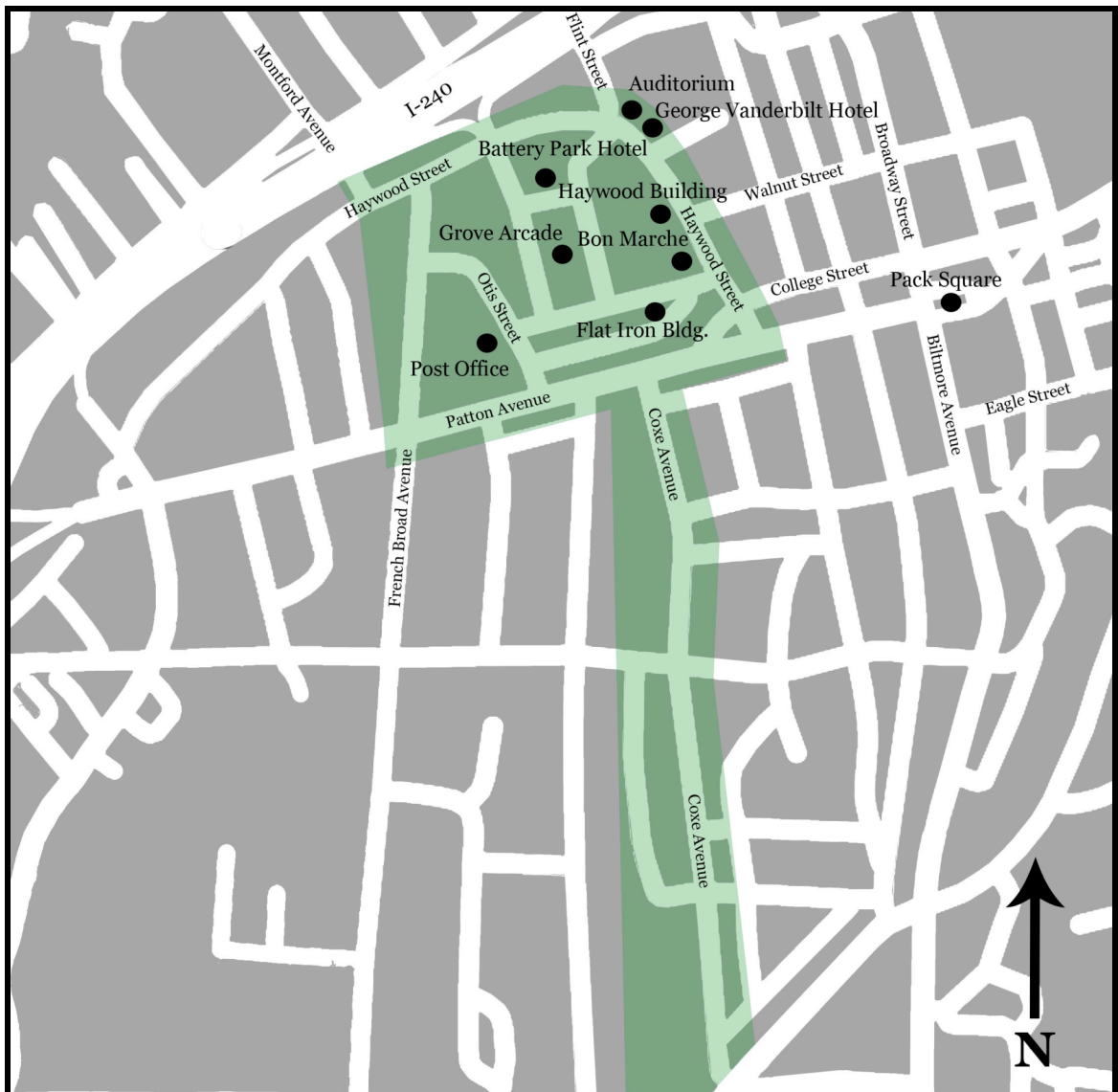


Figure 10: Contemporary map of Asheville. Proposed study area highlighted in green.

Archival Research

The first step in the research process was to review written primary source materials available on the Asheville region. There are many noteworthy sources on Asheville and the Battery Park landscape from 1900 to 1930. Information shedding light on the influences and impact of the Battery Park redevelopment was noted. The following sources were consulted for useful information.

There are files of newspaper clippings on local history in the North Carolina Collection at Asheville's Pack Memorial Library including articles on local women's history, race relations, buildings in the Battery Park area, and biographical information on prominent citizens and architects. These clippings files were reviewed for general information on Asheville's social history as well as for all of the buildings erected in the defined Battery Park area between 1900 and 1930. Additionally, the files for E.W. Grove and the architects of the Battery Park buildings were reviewed. Dates from the pertinent articles were then used to search the microfilm reels for the *Asheville Citizen* and *Asheville Times*. This uncovered advertisements and other helpful information regarding Asheville's history. It was necessary to consider the underlying motivations of those writing newspaper articles and paying for advertisements.

The Pack Memorial Library also contains a complete set of annual city directories that list building occupants, residential and commercial, according to street addresses. This information added to an understanding of how the use of the Battery Park area changed from 1900-1930.

The writings of Thomas Wolfe, though fictional, were a resource for understanding one local perspective of Asheville during the early twentieth century. Thomas Wolfe was born in Asheville in 1900 and grew up in his mother's boarding house on Spruce Street, just North of Pack Square. The plots and characters in Wolfe's writing closely resemble the author's own life growing up in urban Asheville. In fact, his writing is classified as autobiographical fiction. Of particular interest to this research were the descriptive passages about Asheville's built environment, including the places and people surrounding the Battery Park hillside. Wolfe's work paints a dramatic version of the social issues in early twentieth century Asheville. Wolfe's work was interpreted carefully because it is fiction. However, with these concerns in mind, it was a good resource for understanding Asheville's history and landscapes from a local resident's perspective. *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929), *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940), *Welcome to Our City* (1923), and *O, Lost* (the original manuscript for *Look Homeward, Angel* published posthumously in 2000) were reviewed for commentary relating to the Battery Park area and the social issues affecting the city from 1900 to 1930.

Another source on Asheville in the early 1920s is John Nolen's *Asheville City Plan* (Nolen 1922). As mentioned previously, John Nolen was a prominent city planner from Boston who worked in cities all over the country. The plan is an overview of existing conditions and demographics in Asheville. Nolen describes the issues facing the city as well as problems concerning city leaders of the time. Nolen's suggestions regarding the city's future were not followed entirely. However, the suggestions that

were followed as well as the suggestions that were rejected helped reveal the values of the Asheville community, particularly those who had power in city government.

William Stoddart, the architect of Grove's Battery Park Hotel the George Vanderbilt Hotel and "biscuit-cutter" in Thomas Wolfe's 1934 novel, published a manual entitled, *Planning the New Hotel* in 1924. The manual gives information on financing, site selection, determining community needs, and public relations. Additionally, there are numerous advertisements for hotel building products. This resource helped provide an understanding of what was happening in the hotel industry at the time.

Another resource was travel booster booklets published in the early twentieth century to advertise Asheville's appeal to tourists. Three titles were examined for helpful information: *Asheville –The Ideal Autumn and Winter Resort City*, published by the Southern Railway Passenger Traffic Dept. (ca.1913); *Live and Invest in the Land of Sky*, published by the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Real Estate Board (ca. 1925); and *With Pen and Camera thro' "The Land of the Sky": Western North Carolina and the Asheville Plateau*, with text by Holman T. Waldron (1904). The booklets were designed to attract tourist traffic, and later business investors to Asheville. These publications, particularly *Live and Invest in the Land of Sky*, showed what Asheville business leaders believed would entice travelers. Additionally, the booklets revealed the fears and concerns that leaders needed to mitigate.

Visual Materials Analysis

In addition to the written resources about the Battery Park area, there were numerous visual resources available for analysis. Both the Pack Memorial Library and the Special Collections Department at the University of North Carolina Asheville have hundreds of photographs of the Asheville area taken between 1900 and 1930. Of particular interest was the E. M. Ball Collection at UNCA. The collection contains photographs taken of the Asheville environment and its people by four photographers between 1918 and 1967. Ewart M. Ball, Jr. was an early photographer for the *Asheville Citizen-Times* newspaper. Many of the photographs in the collection represent his work for the newspaper. The collection's photographs portray many subjects including local architecture, street life, transportation, and scenery. More photographs were available through the John Nolen Collection at Cornell University. Some of these photographs were taken when the city planner was in Asheville taking field notes for his 1922 City Plan. Additional photographs of the area were sent to Nolen in correspondence, particularly with Grove Investments. The Pack Memorial Library has a searchable database of images from the North Carolina Collection that was of great help in this research.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were also helpful resources. In 1867, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company began publishing maps of the commercial, industrial, and residential sections of cities and towns in the United States. The maps were designed to assist fire insurance companies in determining the hazards associated with particular properties. They include information about the size, shape, and construction materials of

buildings as well as the location of walls, windows and doors, sprinkler systems, and types of roofs. The maps also include widths and names of streets, property boundaries, building use, and house and block numbers. Even though their reliability has been questioned, Sanborn maps remain as an informative source about the structure and use of buildings in American cities. For Asheville from 1900-1930, there were maps made in 1901, 1907, 1913, 1917, 1925, and 1925-1950. The Asheville maps are available online through NCLive.org. The information in these maps was examined for building additions or demolition and changes in use. The maps were also compared to the corresponding city directory year in order to trace occupants and use over time and also to confirm the information contained in the maps.

In addition to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, there are other historic maps of the area. A panoramic, bird's eye view map of Asheville was published in 1912. *Live and Invest Land of Sky*, published by the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Real Estate Board (ca. 1925) contains a map that emphasizes the tourist destinations in the city. John Nolen's 1922 City Plan contains maps of existing conditions, the general plan, the park system, the main thoroughfares, and a zone study. Nolen was careful to include information about streetcar lines, waterways, and black neighborhoods. Of particular interest was what Nolen proposed for the areas close to the old Battery Park Hotel.

Physical Analysis

Physical analysis of the buildings and streets allows for a more detailed evaluation that is less attainable through two-dimensional visual resources such as maps and

photographs. Examination of the area's buildings, topography, and relationship to the rest of the city helped reveal more cultural information about the changes the Battery Park area. Asheville's streetcar route and other views of Battery Park throughout the city were scrutinized for a better understanding of how the leveling of the Battery Park hillside impacted different social groups living in the city. Comparing these tangible views with the vantage point of old photographs also helped in determining meaning.

After reviewing of all the archival, visual, and physical resources the pertinent findings were combined in a research narrative that describes the cultural, economic, social, and technological climate influencing the physical form of the Battery Park landscape. The narrative includes maps, photographs, and tables to help to decipher the influences that led to the physical evolution of this urban landscape.

Researching the transformation of the Battery Park landscape from 1900 to 1930 through archival research, visual and physical analysis helped provide a better understanding of Asheville's history and the meanings behind the city's architectural evolution. Understanding how and why the environment was manipulated was helpful in understanding how it might be changed in the future. Deciphering the causes and impact of this dramatic transformation on Asheville's residents and tourists helped inform an understanding of how to make better urban environments in the future.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH ANALYSIS

A review of the archival, visual, and physical evidence from 1900 to 1930 reveals that the physical transformation of the architecture and landscape of the Battery Park was a tangible representation of Asheville's transition through specific national-scale cultural movements: the Gilded Age of Industrialism, the Progressive movement, and a new 1920s modern era in which the automobile and consumerism became a middle class phenomenon. The evidence also shows Edwin Wiley Grove's tremendous power, influence, and ability to transform this large area of downtown Asheville from a wealthy Victorian retreat into his views of a modern commercial district that would meet Asheville's future needs.

Comparing an early 20th century photograph (Figure 11) of the 1886 Battery Park Hotel to a 1929 photograph of the new Battery Park Hotel and Arcade (Figure 12) illustrates the great changes in Asheville's economy, technology, values, and culture that occurred in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Figure 11 shows a rambling, picturesque, Victorian Hotel set on a hill. Stone and iron gates mark the entrance to a curving tree-lined road leading up to the turreted, multi-gabled structure. This structure and setting is the epitome of Gilded Age Victorian architecture and landscapes. The 1886



Figure 11: Old Battery Park Hotel (Herbert W. Pelton, NC Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC, A711-8).



Figure 12: New Battery Park Hotel and Grove Arcade, circa 1929 (NC Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville, NC, K265-S).

Battery Park Hotel catered to wealthy clients, many of whom had made their money as a result of the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth century. Victorian architecture, with all of its complex gables, turrets, and porches, was a direct response to the fear of losing all things natural and individual in a rapidly industrializing world. It was a time of intense polarization of wealth, and those who had prospered made opulent and extravagant displays of spending their money. One can imagine the symbolism as extremely wealthy individuals, such as George W. Vanderbilt, rode through the gates and up to this picturesque mountain pleasure retreat. According to a description in a turn-of-the century promotional booklet:

Crowning as it does the summit of noble eminence in the centre of a lovely private park of twenty-five acres, and surrounded by a grove of ancient oaks, it presents a most inviting and picturesque appearance, and stands boldly in view for miles in almost any direction. It is scarcely a stone's throw away from the public square of Asheville, yet is one hundred and twenty-five feet above it and so secluded in its own environments that the sojourner within its hospitable walls may find, if he desires, perfect restfulness and repose. (McKissick 1896, 6)

Hotel guests were almost breathing their own natural air, one hundred and twenty-five feet above the rest of Asheville and, yet, they were prominently in view for Asheville's residents. Even though the hotel guests were secluded, the brochure celebrates the convenient proximity to Asheville's commercial public square. In this picturesque world, guests could have whatever they desired – rest, relaxation, and privacy or shopping, business, and commerce on the square.

By the late 1920s, Asheville had transitioned through the Progressive Era where opulence and waste were cast aside in favor of social equality, science, and technology.

Edwin Wiley Grove decapitated the hill and old Battery Park Hotel to make way for modern consumerism and the automobile. What was once the pleasure retreat of an elite group became an engineered landscape of middle class commerce and automobiles. Customers could drive their automobiles and have access to buildings designed by nationally prominent architects. Battery Park visitors could have it all: business and consumerism set amidst the background of salubrious natural vistas. Even skyscraper hotels, once belonging only in large cities like Chicago and New York, were possible in the mountains. Classic architectural detailing harmonized with these new fireproof and efficient building forms. Streets were wide enough to accommodate automobiles in an organized and efficient manner. Since the automobile was the choice mode of transportation for the future, parking and wide flat streets were important symbols in this new consumer landscape. Stores, hotels, and businesses that catered to motorists were symbols of Asheville's progress.

Figures 11 and 12 illustrate the striking contrast in ideas and landscape that Asheville experienced in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. It is within this context that Edwin Wiley Grove forever changed Asheville's downtown Battery Park district.

Edwin Wiley Grove and the Years Leading to the Battery Park Development

E.W. Grove played a major role in transforming the Battery Park landscape. By leveling the old hotel and the hillside beneath it, Grove removed a landmark from Asheville's skyline. According to Alison Isenberg,

Throughout the twentieth century, most downtown real estate decisions were propelled by interested individuals – concerned about the future – who envisioned the possibilities of urban commercial life and tried to create value where buildings and people came together. Put another way, varied downtown investors endeavored to make their own markets and to chart Main Street’s future in order to protect and enhance their stakes. (Isenberg 2004, 2)

Grove’s Battery Park development was first and foremost a business decision. Grove anticipated the future of Asheville and how he could profit from it. Research findings illuminate how and why Grove came to create this great change in Asheville’s city center.

Around 1900, Grove first began spending his summers at a residence in Asheville. Recognizing the attention that Asheville was receiving with the completion of the Biltmore in 1895, Grove began purchasing large tracts of land in North Carolina. By 1910, he owned most of Sunset Mountain and had established the Grove Park residential development. At this time, the Battery Park Hotel was still the center of social life and the elite tourist destination in Asheville (Johnson 1991, 6-7). The progressive reform movement had begun to take hold and the blatant extravagance of the wealthy was beginning to lose its appeal. Grove Park and the Grove Park Inn (completed in 1913) brought every modern convenience to their residents and visitors without the lavish opulence of the past era. The fireproof construction and safety of the buildings was celebrated in advertisements. Stylistically, the buildings were designed with a focus on natural materials and craftsmanship of the mountain surroundings. Even the Roycraft furniture in the Grove Park Inn had clean and simple lines.

In planning Grove Park, Grove believed that incorporating the automobile was a critical component in creating a modern residential development. He was adamant about including garages and automobile-friendly road design in working with Chauncey Beadle, the planner for Grove Park. Grove even removed the rails for a streetcar that took town residents to an overlook at the top of Sunset Mountain. In their place, he constructed the

Sunset Mountain auto way for motor enthusiasts. With the success of the residential development and inn, Grove turned his focus towards Asheville's downtown.

Haywood Street's Transformation, 1900-1930

Before discussing Grove's development projects in the Battery Park area, it is first necessary to explain the general trends of development of the area. The section of Haywood Street from Patton Avenue to French Broad Street was immediately adjacent to both the old Battery Park Hotel and the new Battery Park Hotel and Grove Arcade. Along the streetcar route leading to Montford, an upper middle class residential district, this section of Haywood Street gradually transitioned from single family residences and boarding houses to Asheville's newest commercial corridor. An examination of Asheville's City Directories and the dates corresponding to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps revealed this progression. Table 1 demonstrates how retail and professional offices increased over time and residences decreased over time. The increase in these commercial properties began before Grove started his development of the area. A clear increase in professional offices happened in 1917. This trend corresponds with the appearance of Paul Roebling's Haywood Building, with its novel opening for automobiles to drive through to off-street parking. However, 1925 saw the most dramatic changes with retail space nearly tripling and professional offices quadrupling. It is clear that Grove, whose first buildings were completed in 1924, played the biggest role in transforming the area.

Throughout the period of study, interested parties had clear ideas about what the ideal Battery Park area should be like. Alison Isenberg's (2004) work has shown that early twentieth century postcards of downtowns throughout the country portrayed cities in their most idealized form. Artists, business leaders, and other commissioners made conscious omissions and additions in order to create the postcard view of their Main Streets. Two postcards of Haywood Street demonstrate the difference between the desired ideals in 1905

Table 1: Asheville City Directory information for Haywood Street, from Patton Avenue to French Broad Street. Dates correspond to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

	1901	1907	1913	1917	1925	1930
Government (Post Office, Courts)	3	2	2	7	1	1
Pharmacy	1	2	1	1	2	3
Professional (physician, attorney, bank)	1	18	15	24	102	100
Personal Service (barber, beauty, tailor, teacher)	0	2	4	8	10	10
Restaurant	0	0	1	1	2	4
Food Store (Grocery/Candy/Fruit/Smoke)	1	2	3	4	4	7
Residence	37	33	32	17	14	9
Boarding	8	11	9	6	3	1
Hotel	1	1	1	1	3	2
Retail (hats, gifts, clothing)	0	3	5	9	25	35
Private Club	0	4	5	4	1	0
Hospital/Sanitarium	1	2	2	1	0	0
Church	1	2	2	2	2	1
Auditorium	0	1	1	1	1	1
School	0	0	1	0	2	1
Undertakers	0	0	0	1	0	0
Newspaper	0	0	0	0	1	1
Automobile: Cab Company/Parking/Service Station	0	0	0	0	2	3
Livery	1	0	0	0	0	0

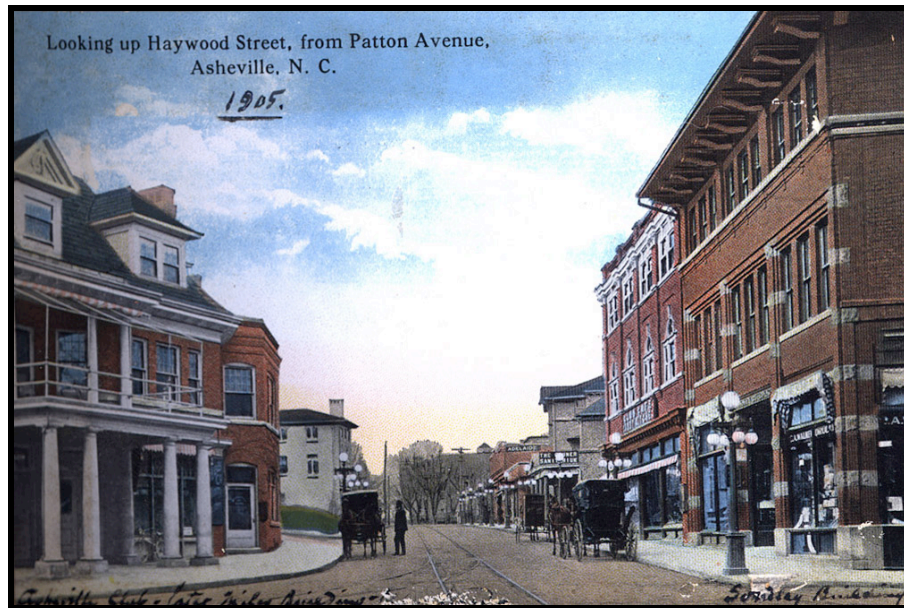


Figure 13: Looking up Haywood Street from Post Office, circa 1905 (Herbert D. Miles Collection, Special Collections, D. H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville, mile053).

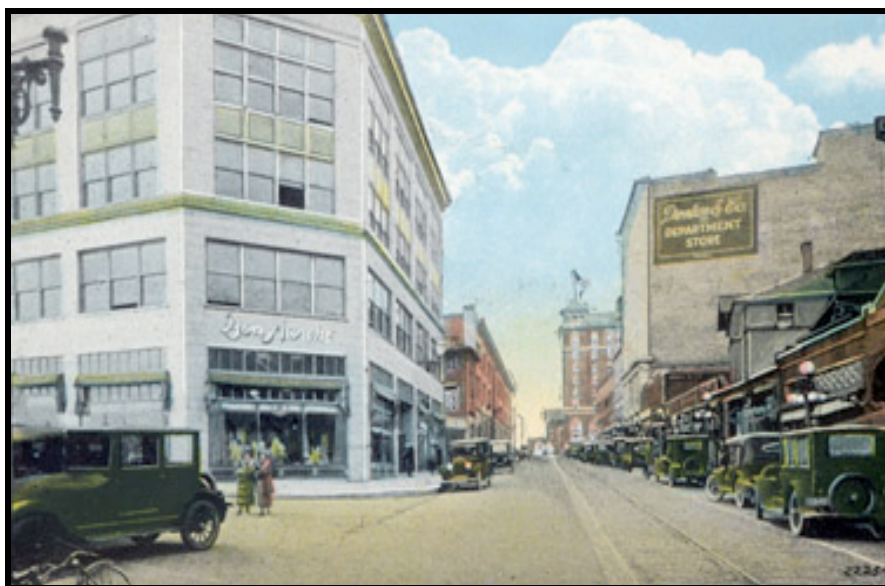


Figure 14: Looking up Haywood Street from Post Office, circa 1925 (Stafford and Wingate L. Anders Collection, Special Collections, D. H. Ramsey Library, University of North Carolina at Asheville, anders020).

and 1925 (Figures 13 and 14). Figure 13 shows several commercial buildings along a streetcar route leading to what was a wooded residential area in the distance. The power lines were omitted from the view though streetlights lined the prominent sidewalks in front of the commercial structures. Three horse carriages were parked on the street, a sign that there was a steady stream of business, without overcrowding. Brick buildings with manufactured metal trim were symbols of civic pride at the turn of the century. More fire resistant than wood, these buildings evoked stability and permanence.

The 1925 postcard in Figure 14 has a different emphasis. Though, like in Figure 13, the street is clean and all the electrical wires are missing, in Figure 14 parked cars lined the street and, except for a small portion of sidewalk in front of the Bon Marche, the sidewalks were not visible. Clearly, it was important to this postcard's commissioners that Haywood Street be portrayed as a place with plenty of parking and no traffic. Haywood Street was Asheville's new, automobile-oriented district. Only two store signs are visible: the Bon Marche department store and Denton's department store. Though one of these two stores likely commissioned the postcard, they were happy to advertise for the other store. In the 1920s and 1930s,

The average retailer who chose to advertise in Main Street postcards had already decided to subordinate his or her particular business interests in order to project a different kind of image – a streetscape of entrepreneurs. (Isenberg 2004, 62)

Figure 14 portrays Haywood Street as the place where all the department stores were moving. The trees and residential district in the distance of the 1905 postcard were replaced in the 1925 postcard by commercial buildings and the new George Vanderbilt skyscraper hotel. Haywood Street was a commercial district and, by the 1920s, it was no longer necessary to present Asheville as a quaint mountain town.

E.W. Grove and the Development of the Battery Park Area

Research evidence shows that Grove was savvy in creating his tangible ideal for Asheville and the Battery Park area while generating profits for himself at the same time. The fact that Grove's employee, Harry Parker was on the four-person planning commission that accepted John Nolen's recommendations is a clear indicator that Grove was sophisticated in protecting his business interests. Grove had the power and influence to discover information related to his business interests before members of the general public. Additionally, Grove's land purchases in the Battery Park are difficult to trace. He disguised his name in real estate transactions through multiple limited liability corporations. Grove further disguised the amount paid for properties, noting only a sale for "ten dollars plus other goods and valuable services" in real estate deeds. These types of strategies helped Grove accumulate a tremendous amount of land at a good price before anyone realized his plans. Once his plans were announced, Grove spent a great deal of time and energy promoting the Battery Park development and the qualities that, he believed, made it appealing.

The title of a 1925 publication published by the Asheville Chamber of Commerce and Real Estate Board is *Live and Invest in the Land of Sky: Asheville, NC*. The 44-page booklet promoted Asheville's latest developments and attractions. Of particular interest is the cover (Figure 15) and the three pages devoted to Grove's Battery Park development (Figure 16, 17, 18).

The cover is an artist's rendering of a view from the Post Office up Patton Street towards Pack Square (Figure 15). It depicts a bustling but orderly street scene where cars and streetcars moved along easily with no sign of traffic congestion. The buildings were

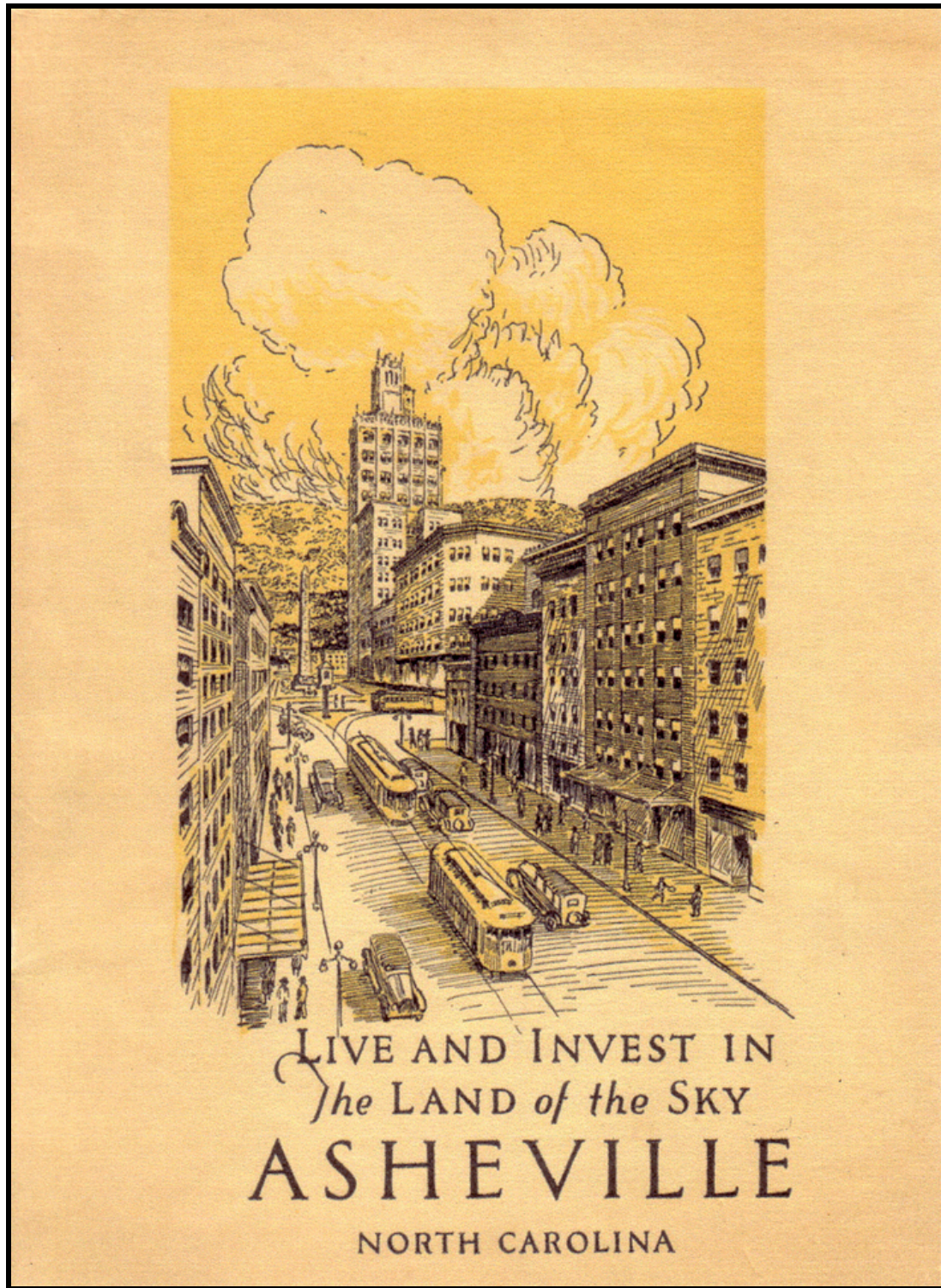


Figure 15: *Live and Invest in the Land of the Sky*, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC at Asheville, cover.

Asheville North Carolina



Airplane View of Coxe Avenue

WHEN Mr. Grove removed Battery Park mountain, he used the material thus made available to fill the unsightly ravine which at that time ran parallel to Coxe Avenue, an important thoroughfare connecting downtown Asheville with Biltmore and the railroad station.

And in doing so, he turned this waste property into valuable business lots, and created what promises to be the automobile center of Asheville. For Coxe Avenue has been widened to 66 feet, and now carries a very large proportion of Asheville's automobile traffic. A number of Asheville's leading automobile dealers have already erected handsome sales offices on Coxe Avenue and others are on the way. This section of Asheville has been the scene of considerable trading activity in the last few months.

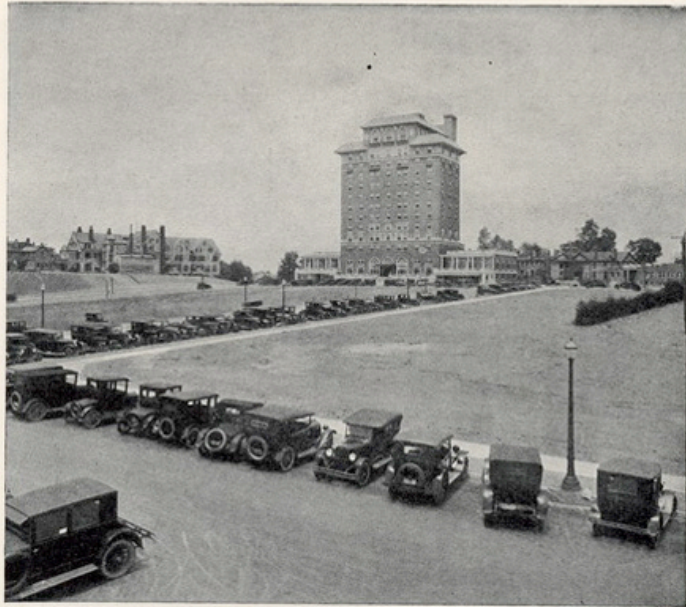
Coxe Avenue lots are generally conceded to be a splendid business property investment. Purchases may be handled through any Asheville Realtor, or through E. W. Grove Investments.

Coxe Avenue, Scene of Great Building Activity



Figure 16: *Live and Invest in the Land of the Sky*, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC at Asheville, lai12.

Asheville North Carolina



Famous Battery Park, and the Battery Park Hotel

*Airplane View of Famous
Battery Park*



THROUGH the vision of Mr. E. W. Grove, whose name is well known to everyone familiar with Asheville, a mountain in the heart of the City was torn down to make valuable business property.

That, briefly, is the story of Battery Park. And now, as a broad level expanse in the shopping center of the City, it is the site of the new Battery Park Hotel, The Bon Marche, Asheville's largest department store, and the handsome Flatiron Building now nearing completion.

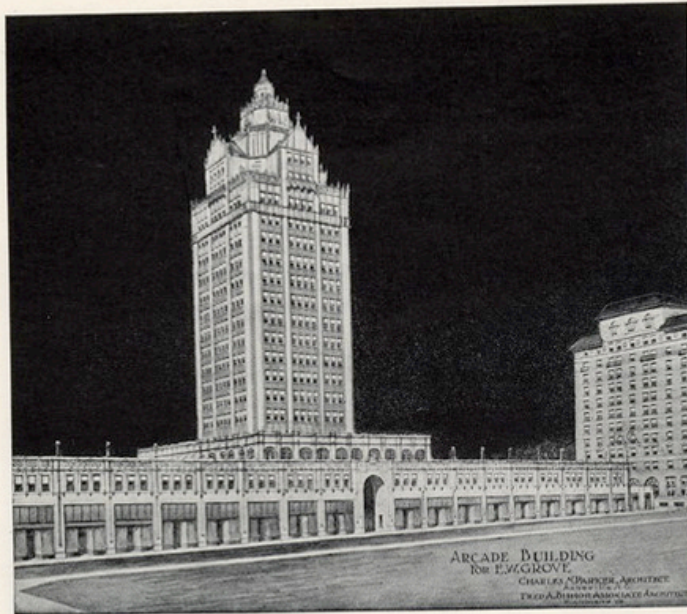
Dr. John Nolen, in his Asheville City Plan, calls Battery Park the tourist capital of Western North Carolina. And well it might be, possessing every feature of location and improvement necessary to make it so. Five acres of new streets are thus added to the city—paved with smooth asphalt over concrete, illuminated with the latest type of ornamental white-way lights and providing free parking space for 500 cars.

E. W. GROVE Investments



Figure 17: *Live and Invest in the Land of the Sky*, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC at Asheville, lai13.

Asheville North Carolina



The Grove Arcade Building (Under Construction)



AND now, as the crowning feature of Battery Park, Dr. Grove is building a magnificent arcade building to cover the plaza in front of the Battery Park Hotel.

This structure will be two stories high, with an arcade running through from north to south, and another from east to west. At the exact intersection of these two arcades will rise a seven-story tower.

The top of the arcade building will be a permanent roof-garden and promenade open to the public night and day. The arcade will provide room for 80 stores, and the tower section will include a restaurant opening on the roof-garden, with office or hotel rooms above. The estimated cost of the structure is \$1,000,000.

Business property in Battery Park is considered as one of Asheville's most attractive investment opportunities. Mr. Grove, after putting these lots on the market for a short while, has withdrawn the remainder which he intends to hold temporarily.

The Bon Marche Building in Battery Park



E. W. GROVE Investments



Figure 18: *Live and Invest in the Land of the Sky*, D. H. Ramsey Library, Special Collections, UNC at Asheville, lai14.

orderly and modern, with Asheville's first skyscraper, the Jackson Building, in prominent view. In reality, the Jackson Building is set back off the square and not as visible when walking on Patton Avenue. Like postcard artists manipulated reality to create an ideal, the cover artists of this publication adjusted the perspective to make the skyscraper, the icon of metropolitan commercialism, more noticeable. The publishers wanted Asheville to appear modern, busy, and efficient to convince outside businessmen and tourists to spend money in their city.

The three pages discussing Grove's Battery Park projects showed that Grove was devoted to the ideal that Asheville was more suitable and adaptable to the needs of the modern consumer than Asheville's regional competition. Figure 16 describes how Grove used the dirt from leveling the Battery Park "mountain" to fill in a ravine and make the "automobile center of Asheville." The message was one of optimism about technology: mountains could be moved in order to bring automobiles to the masses. An aerial photo, another new technological possibility, showed the new land and street. Another photograph showed two new automobile dealership buildings on Coxe Avenue with the emphasis on the newly widened, smooth street in front of them. Statements such as "scene of great building activity," and "important thoroughfare" are more a reflection of Grove's aspirations than the reality in the photographs.

Figure 17 further emphasizes Grove's concept that accommodating the automobile was critical in the creation of a modern commercial center. The largest photograph of the new Battery Park Hotel demonstrated some of the "free parking space for five hundred cars." A smaller aerial photograph of the hotel and surrounding cleared

land further emphasized Grove's belief that no natural feature should impede the creation of flat land for driving cars. The inclusion of a paraphrased opinion of John Nolen was characteristic of Grove's efforts to bolster the legitimacy of his development with the expertise of nationally renowned leaders in their fields.

Figure 18 features Grove's desire to cater to every facet of the commercial landscape: retail, office, hotel, and restaurant. An artist's rendering depicted the Grove Arcade that was under construction at the time of the publication's printing. This building was meant to be Grove's ultimate achievement for the area. With a roof garden, shopping, offices, restaurants, and hotel rooms all in one building with a skyscraper tower, Grove was almost building his own new city. Stylistically, the Arcade's Gothic Revival detailing helped to emphasize the building's verticality and celebrated the technological innovations that made this type of detailing possible. The idea of a roof garden showcased modern technology and the ability to engineer nature in a new man-made context.

Possibly the most striking images in the three pages featuring Grove's development are not those images actually displaying Grove's work or ideas. Instead, the images framing the photographs and renderings of Battery Park highlight more about Grove and the imposition of his will and technology on the natural landscape of Asheville. Those images displayed bucolic scenes of Asheville the way it was, presumably, before Grove began his machinations. Canoeing, fly-fishing and mountain vistas framed images of the near surgical removal of the natural element from Asheville's downtown. The juxtaposition of this green natural imagery with photographs of

automobiles, streets, and commercial buildings suggested that visitors and investors could have it all: commerce and consumerism in close proximity to nature's playground. Grove's plaza, a sterile flat space surrounded by automobiles and broad avenues, was a stark contrast to the natural surroundings displayed in the framing images. These images were part of Grove's idea that a consumer in Asheville could indeed have it all. They were not an ironic happenstance of the layout of the brochure. The impact of the contrasting images underlies the philosophy behind Grove's manipulations of the Battery Park landscape. It was incredibly important to the tourist economy that the natural scenery and leisure activities of Asheville's "Land of Sky" still be accessible to motorists enjoying the new modern commercial automobile district.

Taken together, the images in *Live and Invest in the Land of Sky* tell the reader that the city Asheville, once the isolated retreat of a wealthy few, had triumphed. The "Land of Sky," with all of its spectacular mountains and scenery, would also have two modern man-made achievements: the skyscraper towers of the Battery Park Hotel and the Grove Arcade. Grove and Asheville now had the power to overcome the once difficult terrain. These two feats of engineering had become a new landmark on the highest point in the city of Asheville, equivalent to the beauty and splendor of a natural mountain. The buildings served as a kind of compass, orienting consumers to Asheville's newest commercial district and celebrating the power of technology. The "Land of Sky" was both a destination for natural beauty and for modern skyscraper districts.

Besides Grove's marketing of the development as a place for cars, there was other evidence that suggests Grove's interest in making the area automobile centered. Two

large ramps on the North End of the building would have allowed cars to drive up to the Arcade's "roof garden promenade." There was also a ramp leading to the basement of the building. In an oral history taken by Laurel Shackelford, Fred Loring Seely, Jr., E.W. Grove's grandson, described the Arcade:

It was an uncanny thing, this was in 1924, but they had the whole concept of a shopping mall and they built this building right in front of Battery Park. It was called the Arcade, and it had all the gift shops in one building with a mall interior. Then they got all the good doctors and dentists on the second floor. There were great ramps going up to the roof and they were going to build an apartment hotel on that and put a bridge across to the Battery Park so that people could go across to the restaurants. They put a two-hundred-car garage in the basement and people thought that was the most ridiculous thing: "Why would anybody in the world use all this building space for cars with all this parking space?" Now, of course, there isn't any parking space (Shackelford 1977, 167-8).

At a time when many believed that enough parking was available on the street, Grove was creating off-street underground parking for Arcade customers. Even bad weather was overcome with this new structure. Rain would not be a deterrent to motorists wishing to shop or do business in the Grove Arcade. The idea that the Grove Arcade was an early version of a shopping mall further proves that the Arcade was *avante garde* in catering to the most modern consumer tastes regarding business, shopping, and automobiles.

By going out of his way to create a retail, business, and hotel district that catered to automobiles, dealerships, and parking, E. W. Grove believed that he was making Asheville more regionally competitive and, thus, more profitable for him. William Stoddart, the New York architect who design both 1924 hotels built in the Battery Park

area, the Battery Park and the George Vanderbilt, actually wrote a manual describing how new hotels could help cities attract more visitors. Stoddart designed numerous Hotels throughout the country. In 1924, he published the book *Planning the New Hotel*. Stoddart described the steps taken by the fictitious Mr. Jones:

One fine morning Mr. Jones, a progressive young manufacturer of Blankville (30,000 inhabitants) awoke with a wholly new idea. Where it came from he did not know but as he kept turning it over in his mind, he became more and more impressed with it – and with himself for having given birth to it. Yet, it was a wonderful idea – probably the most remarkable of the many he had conceived and carried through to the benefit of himself, his factory and Blankville.

Blankville needed a new hotel! A modern, well-appointed hotel that would not only do credit to the community, and serve its local institutions more effectively than they had ever been served before, but one that would also attract buyers and visitors from the outside world who would patronize the local stores and stimulate Blankville's commercial life all the way up and down the line.

With the right kind of hotel it might even be possible to take conventions and political rallies away from Bigtown (60,000 inhabitants) twenty miles up the line. (p. 1)

Like many others throughout the country, these new Asheville hotels were conceived and built in order to attract more visitors, buyers, and conventioners. Grove and Asheville's other business leaders were continuously seeking to improve and profit from the city's tourist economy. Stoddart's manual explained that it is best to locate new hotels in close proximity to new retail and business districts and there should be ample room for expansion and automobile parking. While other developers chose their locations carefully, Grove used the old Battery Park Hotel grounds to create his own retail,

business, and hotel district with wide streets and ample parking. No other Asheville developers had the influence, wealth, and ability to accomplish so much at once.

Even though Grove did not live to see the completion of his vision and the Grove Arcade tower was never completed, he was successful in creating a retail, business, and hotel district that gave the newly automobile-oriented middle class access to the designs of prominent architects and accommodations in a region that was once the pleasure retreat of only a privileged few. Figure 19 demonstrates this outcome. The photograph showed multiple cars parked in front of the new Battery Park Hotel and Grove Arcade, with a miniature golf course in the foreground. Chester Liebs has documented these miniature courses that became a popular American novelty for vacant inner-city lots. According to Liebs,

The period following World War I saw a great surge in interest in golf as large numbers of Americans, from clerks to shop owners, in an attempt to boost their own status sought out the sport that had once been nearly the exclusive province of the upper social strata. (Liebs 1985, 137)

Miniature golf was a way for Grove's customers to boost their status. This tiny golf course, dramatically different in scale to the towering Battery Park Hotel, proved technology's great range in catering to the desires and amusements of the modern middle



Figure 19: Battery Park Hotel with miniature golf course in foreground (E.M. Ball Collection, Ramsey Library Special Collections, UNCA, ba111540).

class consumer. Even multi-acre golf courses could be engineered to fit onto small urban lots. Grove had succeeded in bringing the elite Asheville retreat to the masses with his development of the Battery Park landscape.

All of the images discussed in this analysis: the contrasting photos of the Battery Park hill, the 1905 and 1925 postcards of Haywood Street, the pages about E.W. Grove's development projects in *Live and Invest in the Land of Sky*, and the final photograph of the miniature golf course suggest together that the Battery Park landscape of 1930 was the result of E.W. Grove's progressive vision. Grove had key ideas about how to create a modern profit-generating tourist center and the power and financial resources to realize these ideas. To Grove, the most modern and appealing consumer landscape was one that gracefully harmonized technology, culture, nature, business, shopping, and tourism in a landscape that could accommodate a large group of people seeking to improve themselves in this new world of optimism and possibility. It was E.W. Grove who transitioned the area from a park-like residential neighborhood surrounding a mountaintop hotel to an automobile-friendly plaza with renowned architectural designs housing retail, commercial, and hotel space that did not sacrifice access to Asheville's traditional natural amenities and leisure activities. Grove responded to and anticipated tourism industry fashions with a single modern district that would attract a new, larger middle-class clientele to Asheville. Grove's wealth, power, and influence allowed him to forever change the city in accordance with this profit-seeking vision of the future.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In 1900 the Battery Park area was, for the most part, a single family residential and boarding house district surrounding the park-like grounds of a Gilded Age Victorian luxury hotel. As the years passed, an auditorium, several clubs, shops and professional offices opened along the streetcar routes on Haywood Street and Patton Avenue. Most of these businesses were taking advantage of the proximity to guests staying at the Battery Park Hotel and nearby boarding houses. In 1917, Paul Roebling's Haywood Building established the tradition of catering to a more elite crowd by including a parking garage for the motoring enthusiast. By the 1920s, a new ideal had formed for downtown Asheville. It was one of modernity and consumerism. Edwin Wiley Grove seized on this ideal and, in a less than ten years, created his own profit-promising vision of the ideal. He tore down the old Battery Park hotel and leveled the grounds creating a skyscraper hotel and business district that provided ample parking, and every other convenience that might be needed by conventioners and tourists. He also created an automobile district for sales and service of an increasingly more popular mode of transportation. The landscape Grove created was consistent with the Progressive ideal: making the latest culture, architecture, and technology available for all of posterity to enjoy. It was a new world where profits could be made from the belief that modernity and consumerism could increase social status.

Future Research

While this research uncovered how Grove transformed the Battery Park area, more work is need in finding how the changes in the landscape affected groups outside of the up-and-coming white middle class. There is some evidence that suggests that a small black residential area along Coxe Street was eliminated when Grove filled in the ravine. John Nolen's *City Plan* discusses the "undesirable" qualities of this area prior to Grove's manipulations. However, more work is needed to understand how the transformation of the landscape affected African Americans and race relations in Asheville. Another area for future work is understanding how women were affected. Evidence suggests that Grove tore down a number of boarding houses on Haywood Street when he was creating his vision. These less expensive accommodations were often the livelihood of widows and single women. More work is needed to show what happened to these women as a result of Grove's developments.

Learning from the Research Process

Writing a thesis is an emotional journey and a great learning experience as much as it is a final academic exercise leading to a degree. What was most difficult the process was not writing the paper, but rather, learning to let go of idealistic preconceptions about the final result. When beginning research on a particular topic, one cannot help but have specific hopes about what the sources will uncover. In this research, I had hoped to uncover information related to groups and cultures not usually documented in traditional

historical research such as women, blacks, and people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Instead, the sources revealed much more about Edwin Wiley Grove, an upper-class, ultra elite, and powerful developer. Once Grove had become to predominate subject of the paper, it was still difficult to let go of all of the interesting but unrelated pieces of information gathered over a long period of time. My advisors and mentors should receive much credit in helping me to overcome these hurdles. The result is a much more concise and focused study which contributes to a better understanding of Asheville's cultural history.

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